

NORTH WITCHFORD
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health
for the Year, 1953

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES and GENTLMEN,
I beg to present to you my report for the year 1953 on the health condition of your district during that period.
I also present the Sanitary Inspector's report.
I have the honour to be, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
CECIL THOMAS,
Medical Officer of Health.

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR HEALTH SERVICES

- (1) Public Health Committee.
This comprises the whole Council.
- (2) Public Health Officers.
Medical Officer of Health—CECIL THOMAS, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.
Sanitary Inspector—JOHN METCALFE, M.R.San.I.
- (3) Nursing in the Home.
The entire district has the services of Trained Nurses under the control of the Local Authority.
- (4) Hospital.
Most patients are now treated at Doddington Hospital.
- (5) Ambulance Facilities.
These are controlled by the County Council.
- (6) Child Welfare.
Clinics are held at Doddington and Manea.



Social Conditions.
The bulk of the adult population is engaged in agricultural work and there are a considerable number of small holdings under the control of the Isle of Ely County Council. Agricultural work also provides seasonal employment for many of the female adult population.

General Statistics.

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Area (acres) | 26,088 |
| Population (estimated mid year by Registrar General) | 4,845 |
| Number of inhabited houses | 1,589 |
| Rateable Value | £14,131 |
| Sum represented by a penny rate | £58 17s. 7d. |

The estimated population shows a decrease of 25 on the previous year, which was 153 less than the census return for 1951.

Vital Statistics.

Table 1. Live Births:

| | M. | F. | Total |
|--------------|----|----|-------|
| Legitimate | 30 | 24 | 54 |
| Illegitimate | — | 2 | 2 |
| | 30 | 26 | 56 |

The birth rate at 11.55 per 1,000 population, continues to show a downward trend, and is below the figure for England and Wales at 15.5 per 1,000 population. The birth rate for the District in the previous year (63 births) was 12.93 compared with that of England and Wales at 15.3.

Table. Still Births:
There was only one still birth (male) in the District during 1953, giving a Still Birth Death Rate of .02 per 1,000 population and 17.85 per 1,000 live births. For England and Wales the figures are .035 per 1,000 population and 22.4 per 1,000 live births.

Table 3. Infantile Mortality:
There were no deaths of infants in the District under the age of 4 weeks or under one year.
The Infantile Mortality rate for the year for the whole country was 26.8 per 1,000 live births.



Table 4. Deaths in Area and Causes:

| | M. | F. | Total |
|--|----|----|-------|
| Cancer | 2 | 10 | 12 |
| Vascular Lesions of Nervous System | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Coronary Disease Angina | 3 | — | 3 |
| Hypertension with Heart Disease | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Other Heart Diseases | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| Other Circulatory Diseases | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Influenza | 2 | — | 2 |
| Pneumonia | 1 | — | 1 |
| Hyperplasia of Prostate | 1 | — | 1 |
| Other Defined and Ill-defined Diseases | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| All Other Accidents | — | 1 | 1 |
| Suicide | 1 | — | 1 |
| | 21 | 28 | 49 |

The death rate for 1953 was 10.11 per 1,000 population compared with 11.4 for England and Wales. For the previous year the District death rate (47 deaths) was 9.65 per 1,000 population as against 11.3 for England and Wales.

Notifiable Infectious Diseases

| Disease. | Total Notified |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Meningitis | 1 |
| Scarlet fever | 3 |
| Pertussis | 28 |
| Pneumonia | 22 |
| Sonne Dysentery | 3 |
| Measles | 61 |
| | 118 |

The three cases of Sonne Dysentery were notified from Doddington Hospital, having been admitted from an adjoining District.

Food Poisoning Outbreaks.

There were no notified outbreaks of food poisoning during 1953.

NORTH WITCHFORD
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Sanitary Inspector's Report for the Year, 1953

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

The following are the numbers of visits and inspections carried out during 1953:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Water Supply | 13 |
| Drainage | 41 |
| Fried Fish Shops | 15 |
| Vans and Sheds | 44 |
| Factories | 15 |
| Bakehouses | 12 |
| Sanitary Accommodation | 7 |
| Refuse Collection | 3 |
| Refuse Dumps | 9 |
| Rats and Mice (inoluding premises visited by Rodent Operator) | 281 |
| Refuse Accumulations | 6 |
| Miscellaneous Sanitary Visits | 41 |
| Nightsoil Disposal | 6 |
| Sewers and Sewage Disposal Works | 268 |
| Dykes | 19 |
| Building Byelaws | 254 |
| Drain and sewer tests | 41 |
| Piggeries | 5 |
| Petroleum Installations | 7 |

Housing.

Under Public Health Acts.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| No. of houses inspected | 24 |
| No. of vists paid to above houses | 55 |

Under Housing Acts.

| | |
|---|-----|
| No. of houses inspected | 7 |
| No. of visits paid to above houses | 14 |
| Miscellaneous Housing Visits | 9 |
| Visits to houses to carry our disinfestation against vermin | 2 |
| Visits to Council houses | 736 |

Meat and Food Inspection.

| | |
|--|----|
| Meat Inspection Visits for emergency slaughter | 7 |
| Butchers' shops | 13 |
| Grocers' shops | 21 |
| Ice Cream Premises (retail) | 9 |

Interviews and Meetings attended 1,335

Notices Served.

| | |
|--|----|
| No. of written informal notices served | 24 |
| No. of above complied with | 19 |
| No. of above in hand at close of year | 3 |
| Demolition Orders Served | 4 |
| Demolition Orders carried out (including those made pre 1953) | 7 |
| Statutory Notices (Public Health Act) served and complied with | 2 |

Housing.

Progress during the year in the erection of new Council houses showed much improvement over that of the previous year, 14 houses and 6 Old People's Bungalows being handed over for occupation, which brought the total of post war Council houses up to 80, plus 10 bungalows and 15 pre-fabricated bungalows. At the end of the year there were 28 houses under construction.

Private enterprise made the contribution of 8 new dwellings completed during the year and there were four under construction at the close of the year. In addition two bungalows were completed by County Council Small Holding Departments.

No applications were received for Improvement Grants under Section 20 of the Housing Act, 1949, or applications for grants under Section 3 of the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1938.

There are still many sub standard houses in the District, many of which are either worn out or not suitable for reconditioning. In the villages the policy of enforcing the provision of water closets, sinks and drainage would only embarrass the obsolete sewerage systems. It is therefore not possible to report much improvement in the standard of privately owned housing accommodation.

With regard to clearance of houses officially represented as unfit for human habitation, it is gratifying to report that a group of 6 cottages at Wimblington condemned as long ago as 1936 have at last been demolished. In addition, one of five other dwellings represented as unfit during the year was demolished, of the remainder two were standing empty at the end of the year awaiting demolition and the other two were the subject of undertakings not to relet.

Demolition was carried out voluntarily of 7 old cottages, one only of which was occupied, the tenant being rehoused in a new bungalow.

6 Informal notices were served for repairs to houses, of which 4 had been completed by the end of the year.

Two Statutory Notices under the Public Health Act were served and complied with.

The amount of time available for inspection of rented houses (privately owned) is limited owing to the numerous other duties to be carried out, including repairs and maintenance of Council houses. No fewer than 736 calls were made at Council houses during the course of the year.

Civil Building Control and Building Byelaws.

Due to the raising of the licensing ceiling for repairs to £500, only 3 licences (value £2,040) were issued during the year on behalf of the Ministry of Works authorising repairs and additions to existing houses.

81 plans were deposited with the Council under the Building Byelaws, all of which were approved. 254 inspections were made of premises in the course of erection or undergoing alteration.

New Building Byelaws based on the Model issued by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government were made by the Council during the year and came into operation on the 7th of November, 1953.

Water Supply.

The following is the information requested by the Ministry of Health:—

(i) In those parts of the parishes of Doddington and Wimblington served by the Wisbech and District Water Board, the water supply has been adequate in quantity and there have been no complaints as to quality.

So far as the parish of Manea is concerned, the position remains much the same as during the previous year and daytime pressure in the delivery main cannot be considered satisfactory for portions of the village. However, pressure should be vastly improved when the new trunk main in course of construction by the Water Board links up with the existing main to Manea. This main will afford a supply to the village of Stonea, which at present relies on rainwater and river water for drinking and domestic purposes, augmented by mains water carted when necessary. Welches Dam relies on similar arrangements.

It is gratifying to report that work was commenced during 1953 on the laying of the water main from Doddington to Benwick, and at the close of the year the main had reached the first house in Benwick. The village had of course continued to exist on the normal rain and river water supplies during the year, except during a period of drought in the Spring when it was necessary to cart and distribute mains water for drinking and domestic purposes. 5,000 gallons were conveyed to Benwick and 3,000 to Stonea.

(ii) No independent sampling of the piped supply is carried out by the Council.

(iii) No action was necessary in respect of contamination.

(iv) The local supply of water is not plumbo-solvent.

(v) Proportion of dwelling houses supplied from public mains:

| Parish | Direct to Houses | By standpipe |
|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| Wimblington | 86% | 2½% |
| Doddington | 70% | 2% |
| Manea | 81% | 9% |
| Welches Dam | Nil | Nil |
| Benwick | Nil | Nil |

Two samples of water were taken at the County Hospital, Doddington, which proved to be satisfactory.

For the following information regarding new water mains laid in the District in 1953 and the number of new connections to the mains, I am indebted to Mr. J. K. Dawson, the Water Engineer to the Wisbech and District Water Board.

New Mains.

Doddington 8in. main 294 yards (renewed).

Doddington to Benwick 4in. main 5,992 yards.

Wimblington 3in. main 41 yards.

New Connections.

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Doddington | 11 |
| Manea | 11 |
| Wimblington | 17 |

On the application of Whittlesey Urban District Council, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government made a "Fringe Order" authorising the supply of water by that Authority to premises inside the area of North Witchford, namely Hungry Hall, Benwick.

Drainage and Sewerage.

Certain portions of the oldest built up areas of Doddington, Wimblington and Manea are served by old combined storm water and foul sewers, all of which discharge into obsolete works or open dykes. It is not surprising therefore that considerable pollution by sewage matter occurs in such dykes, and in turn in the drains forming part of the extensive land drainage system in the area, resulting in complaints from land users and Drainage Boards. With the advent of piped water supply in the village of Benwick, the need for a proper drainage system becomes apparent, since many occupiers wish to add modern amenities to their property long denied them owing to the absence of an adequate water supply. After deliberation the Council decided to call in their Consulting Engineers to go into the sewerage schemes prepared in 1945, for the whole of the Area, with a view to finding out the estimated present day costs with or without modifications and also the possibility of Government grants.

The construction of sewerage systems and sewage disposal plants for the Wimblington and Manea new housing estates was completed during the year. The filter beds at the old sewage works at Doddington were overhauled, including the provision of new media. 264 yards of sewage polluted ditch at Wimblington were piped during the year to form an extension to an existing 9in. combined sewer. In addition ordinary maintenance work of cleansing sewage dykes and emptying settlement tanks and catchpits at various outfalls was carried out with the assistance of a Contractor's cesspool emptier.

Drainage disposal to such other houses as are provided with drainage systems is, in the main, by use of septic tanks, cesspools and soakwells, which function with varying degrees of success. A large number of houses, particularly in Manea and Benwick, are provided with pail closets, and many other properties have vault closets.

Public Cleansing.

Night soil is still collected by contractors, composted with straw and utilised on arable land. The contracts provide for 3 collections of closet pails per fortnight and some 670 closets are dealt with. This collection used to be done during the hours of darkness, but in recent years with the shortage of labour it has been the practice in most portions of the area (in common with other districts) to make collections in the day time and it has become an unpleasant necessity to have vehicles collecting pail contents standing and operating in the streets in broad daylight. This can only be regarded as a very regrettable state of affairs when one realises by the middle of the twentieth century the system for removal of human waste is no better than that existing in 1900. Only by adequate and expensive water borne sewerage systems draining to properly designed sewage disposal works can the problem be satisfactorily solved.

Cesspools and vaults are emptied upon request by occupiers by one of the Contractors, who uses a cesspool emptier for this purpose. The contents are either discharged on to arable land or disposed at the night soil tipping points.

Tins and indestructible household refuse are collected at monthly intervals by contract, employing the kerbside method. Disposal is effected in dis-used gravel pits, where the refuse is periodically covered with soil specially carted to the site. Unfortunately these sites are open to all-comers and a certain amount of indiscriminate tipping occurs, which makes it difficult and expensive to cover the entire tipping face with soil. The refuse contractors carried out their duties very satisfactorily during the year under review.

Milk Supply.

The bulk of the milk supply is now distributed by two firms operating from dairies situated outside the District. Such milk is either Tuberculin Tested or Pasteurised.

The following licences were issued during the year under the Milk (Special Designations) Regulations, 1949:

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Supplementary Licences: | Pasteurised | 2 |
| | Tuberculin Tested | 2 |
| | Tuberculin Tested Milk (Pasteurised) | 1 |
| | Sterilised | 1 |

The following samples of milk were taken during the course of delivery by roundsmen for examination at the Public Health Laboratory, Cambridge, and all were satisfactory:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Pasteurised | 3 |
| Sterilised | 1 |
| Tuberculin Tested | 1 |
| Tuberculin Tested (Pasteurised) | 1 |
| Ungraded | 1 |

Meat and Other Food Inspection.

None of the seven slaughterhouses existing in the District has been licensed under Section 57 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938. Home killed meat supplied to this area is slaughtered in the adjoining Urban District of March, where it is inspected at the time of slaughter. 27 pigs were inspected on premises in the District after emergency slaughter. These were passed as fit for human consumption except for the following:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 carcase and organs (sow). | Generalised Tuberculosis. |
| 3 heads. | Tuberculosis. |
| 3 plucks. | Inflammation. |

In addition the following home killed meat was inspected at Butchers' shops and condemned for reasons stated:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Pork 9lbs. | Abscess. |
| Pork 135 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. | Haemorrhages. |
| Beef 27lbs. | Haemorrhages. |

Other foodstuffs inspected in Grocers' shops and voluntarily surrendered (being unfit for human consumption) included:

- 1 tin Condensed Milk.
- 5 tins Evaporated Milk.
- 3 tins Peaches.
- 1 tin Cherries.
- 3 tins Tomatoes.
- 1 tin Mixed Vegetable Soup.
- 1 tin Plums.
- 2 tins Pork Luncheon Meat.
- 4 tins Salmon.
- 7 pkts. Glacé Cherries.
- 1 tin Ox Tongues.

Ice Cream.

No Ice Cream is manufactured in the area. Two additional shops were registered under Section 14 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, for the sale and storage of ice cream, the total number of premises now in use for sale of ice cream being 13. Six samples of ice cream were taken and submitted for examination at the Public Health Laboratory, these being placed in the undermentioned categories:

| | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| Grade 1. | — | 5 Samples. |
| Grade 2. | — | 1 Sample. |

Food Premises.

- (1) The number of food premises in the area is as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Grocer and general provision stores | 18 |
| Confectioners | 2 |
| Butchers | 6 |
| Bakers | 6 |
| Fish Shops | 5 |
| Cafes | 2 |

- (2) 13 premises are registered under Section 14 of the Food and Drugs Act for the sale of Ice Cream. There are no dairies in the District.
- (3) Nine inspections were made during the year of premises registered for the sale of Ice Cream.
- (4) No special activity has been undertaken during the year regarding clean food campaigns. Byelaws for handling food have been adopted under Section 15 of the Food & Drugs Act, 1938.
- (5) The small quantities of condemned tinstuffs have been disposed of by burial at the refuse dumps, whilst the meat has been returned to the Ministry of Food Depot with an official condemnation certificate.

Moveable Dwellings.

There are no large caravan sites in the area. Fourteen licences were issued under Section 269 of the Public Health Act, 1936, authorising the use of caravans for a limited period on individual sites. One prosecution was made under Section 269 and the offender was fined, unfortunately without the desired effect of securing the removal of the caravans.

Rodent Control.

Comparatively few complaints have been received regarding infestation generally, and these have all been dealt with. The various sewage dykes and refuse tips are treated regularly by the Council's employee. The Pest Department of the Isle of Ely County Agricultural Executive Committee carry out a considerable amount of rat destruction in the area, having contracts for the treatment of over 100 premises.

Factories Acts.

During the year 27 inspections were made to Bakehouses and premises classed as factories. Defects or want of cleanliness were found and remedied at six premises. There are no outworkers employed.

J. METCALFE,
Sanitary Inspector.

29th June, 1954.

